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Size Zero Jeans

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Dark, ocean blue. Low-Waisted. Size Zero. And frankly, *very* tight
—but I didn't care. It made me feel *pretty*

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#### preface:

Time and time again, we let the sweet phrase “you are perfect just the way you are” slip out our tainted mouths, yet we hold ourselves to impossible standards that one can only achieve through self-deprecation. The sweet lies that we tell another yet never apply these pinterest quotes to uplift ourselves. The tragic story that wraps itself in gold and silver, disguised in the words of skinny, healthy, and diet, glittering in the eyes of our society. This is the hypocritical nature of human kind: to profess universal acceptance for all but shame and hate the one person that matters the most—ourselves. It the unattainable standards that we create in our own twisted minds, rooted in jealousy, self hatred, and insecurity, that inhibit us from developing a loving relationship with our mind and soul.

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I was never one to truly wear pants since they never fit me in the way they fit the long-legged girls in magazines. Instead, I settled for the heaps of skirts and shorts that were scattered on my carpet floor, but they never truly masked the deep hatred for my short, stocky legs. Most days, I would pair my shorts with a long shirt, desperate to cover any part of my round, curvy thighs. It was quite ironic that I, who hated the shape of my legs, would only wear bottoms that exposed them to the public, but the feeling of squeezing into too-tight pants broke my soul more than the intense loathing that had plagued my confidence. I knew that if this was a fairytale, and I, the deathly beautiful princess, was granted one wish, it would wisely not be spent on “true” love, the oily skin I was cursed with, nor the unsymmetrical eyes that were misplaced on my face. Instead, I would wish for my thick, too-wide legs to magically elongate and have a lean, muscular definition to them. The type of legs that could easily slide into a pair of skinny jeans.

However, in the summer of my sixth-grade year, my intense hostility for pants turned into a warm, confidence-filling obsession as my mother passed down one of her jeans to me—to be exact, a size-zero pair of jeans. It was beautiful: rhinestones near the belt, white stitching trailing from the outside, and made of coarse yet fine material. I couldn't resist its potent beauty, so I forced my thighs into the tiny confines of the dark, blue jeans, trying to suck in every inch of my growing stomach with much force to button the pants, and to my pure delight, they fit. Well, I couldn't breathe or move or sit or walk properly, but they fit. Best of all, the movement-restricting pants made me feel *pretty*. They made me feel like the women in the magazines who embodied grace and beauty. I could stare at my reflection without wanting to break it apart into tiny, million pieces. Was this what self-love felt like?

For the next three years, these jeans were incorporated into almost every outfit I wore. Even as I hit my growth spurt and the jeans awkwardly reached well above my ankle, I continued to wear these pants with pride. They accompanied me everywhere: to Sunday service, school events, grocery shopping, and birthday parties. They became apart of me, and without them, I did not know who I was. My jeans became my identity; they became me.

I no longer cared about the tingling sensation jolting in my legs or how the world felt a bit dizzier than it should. The round skin of my stomach were marked with red lines from the waistband of the jeans rubbing too tightly, and my body pleaded to be released from the tight material that suffocated it. However, I ignored the moans and croaks of my body. All that truly mattered was how my size-zero jeans wrapped around my massive, protruding thighs and somehow created the optical illusion of skinny to the outside world.

I knew that I was in pain, mentally and physically, but I justified my actions, repeating to myself "beauty is pain." So desperate to taste a small bite of confidence, I whispered these lies to my brain. *Beauty is pain. Beauty is pain. Beauty is pain.* Like a double sided sword, to exist with beauty was to exist with pain, and I would rather live in agony than live in fear of my own body.

Fast forward a few years

Today, those jeans are under a pile of garbage, wasting away in a landfill. *MY JEANS*: the ones that brought me confidence. *MY JEANS*: the ones that I poured my identity into *MY JEANS*: the ones that made me feel *pretty*. They were gone, but I felt free like a prisoner who has been shackled free. Since disposing my jeans, it is evident that I have gained more weight—my calves fuller and my stomach still enormous. However, I wear pants. I wear crop tops, and the piles of skirts and shorts are now replaced with leggings. I have learned to wear whatever makes me *happy*, not *pretty*.

Pondering back on my old self, I cannot help but be enraged at the fueling hatred I had for my body. I was beauty—no, I *am* beauty—yet my false figment of imagination clouded myself from seeing what I truly was.

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The idea of fitting inside jeans was never the problem.  
The number on the scale was never the problem.  
The size of my pants was never the problem.

*I was the problem.  
My unattainable standards.  
My false definition of beauty  
The issue was solely rooted in me*

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Beauty is never encapsulated in a pair of jeans.
Beauty is *not* supposed to be pain. It never should be, nor will it ever be.